

## Inside the Israeli Conflict

Four A.M., in the middle of a field in Israel, a 19 year-old Canadian native, who asked their name not be used was woken up after an hour of rest to crawl 1200 meters up and down a thorn covered mountain. After many soldiers finished their task they noticed two still making their way up. Despite their extreme exhaustion, the soldiers went back down the mountain to finish the crawl with the two soldiers. The Canadian recalls, "At that moment the sun came up. It was the strongest form of brotherhood I had ever seen."

The ongoing Israeli conflict has caused a multitude of positive and negative perceptions of Israel. In many ways, the conflict has been misrepresented by the lack of knowledge and understanding of the Israeli government, people, and history. The current native Canadian soldier joined the army to protect the land he felt connected to through religion, and felt misled about the conflict through the media, wanting to experience it for himself. Twenty-five-year-old Elad Machluf served his required three years in the army being an Israeli citizen, then went on to become a commander in the Muslim Quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem for three years. "If you really want to know the truth, you need to go to Israel and see it with your eyes," said Elad.

War itself has not occurred in Israel since 2006. The problems occurring now are considered a conflict with the bordering countries. When there is no war, the soldiers on base are guarding the borders of Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and the West Bank. The daily routine for Israeli soldiers differs depending on the unit they're in. The Canadian soldier serves in a unit that focuses on special operations. His daily routine consists of working on techniques, learning Israel's history, or being on guard. He explained, "Some nights we work through the next day, or have a surprise wake up, grab our equipment and leave out to the field." As a commander,

Elad's routine consisted of gathering his soldiers, briefing each one individually, and helping them with their personal and professional problems. In the Old City, his soldiers were to check the ID's and search for weapons of those walking into the holy area. "Being a hostile area, people would get angry with those actions, and start to fight. I took care of those situations, and offered solutions," said Elad.

The occasional terror attacks include stabbings, shootings, throwing rocks, and setting off fireworks. Elad recalls a time when he was a soldier, he was walking towards his base, and his commander came running behind him, grabbed him, and screamed there was a terror attack. As he was running he saw one of his soldiers on the ground in a puddle of blood, not moving. "He was stabbed in many places on his body, and he looked dead. The paramedics were there taking care of him and succeeded to save him."

In order to terminate the conflict in Israel, Elad explained, "the two organizations, Hamas and Hezbollah need to be done, when they are done, there will be peace in Israel."

Similarly, Mosab Hassan Yousef, the son of Sheikh Hassan Yousef, leader of Hamas in the West Bank believes terrorist groups are to blame for the ongoing conflict, not Israel. In a Channel 4 News interview, Yousef said, "Israel was forced into this type of war. Hamas dragged Israel to this war and used Palestinian children and innocent people as their shield. Israel is not a dictatorship and it is not an idealistic terrorist organization." Yousef grew up believing Jewish people were the enemy. He was supposed to become a Hamas leader until he was arrested and held by Shin Bet, an Israeli Security Agent in 1997. He became aware of the inhumane methods of Hamas and agreed to work as an Intelligence Agent for Shin Bet.

Israeli soldiers, medics, and officers aid all injured, and in need of medical treatment regardless of their citizenship or beliefs. Elad explained, “we opened a lot of field hospitals that accept Syrians from the boarder. Especially women and children to get medical treatment in Israel.” Mosab Yousef described another example in a speech at the United Nations, “I know terrorists when I spent time in prison, who had blood of Jewish people and they had the right to go to schools, and study and achieve higher degrees from Israeli schools.”

Success regarding the Israeli conflict has a different meaning to each person affected by it. The Canadian soldier defines success serving in the Israeli Defense Forces as impacting the way foreign countries view Israel. He explained, “many countries accuse Israel as being an occupant of Arab land. I want to give others who are not here an actual understanding of the conflict, not one through the media.”

As for Israeli citizens, Elad explained they are thankful for what we are doing, “Jewish people and others come up to me and say ‘thank you for your service, thank you for what you do,’ this is the best thing to me.”